

KIDS 9-14 YEARS

A REPORT BY THE
NSW COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT 9-14 YEAR OLD KIDS

WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT KIDS 9-14 YEARS?

This is a time of big change. Kids go through physical changes. They are more independent, spend less time with their families, and their friends become more important in their lives. Kids often gain extra family responsibilities, and they might even start work for the first time.

At such an important age, kids need to be encouraged and supported, so that they can feel good about themselves and do their best.

WHO ARE WE?

The NSW Committee on Children and Young People is a group of politicians from the NSW Parliament. Parliament makes the laws for the people of NSW and has a major role in how the state is run. Part of the Committee's job is to find out what is important to kids and about what needs to be done to help them.

WHAT DID WE DO?

We found out about kids aged 9-14 years by talking to kids, parents, teachers, and to people who provide services to this age group. As this information was put into a very long report, we decided to write something shorter that kids might like to read.

IT'S
A TIME
OF
CHANGE

more independent
start working

changes in brain development

changes in the way kids think
physical changes

WHAT DO KIDS THIS AGE NEED?

WE FOUND OUT THAT KIDS NEED:

*** TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEMSELVES AND TO BE APPRECIATED BY OTHERS FOR WHO THEY ARE**

The first aspect we feel is very important is being confident and having high self-esteem. ... Self-esteem gives you the ability to take on new challenges and try to achieve a useful and productive life. [Jamie, Hebersham Public School]

*** TO ACHIEVE, LEARN AND FEEL LIKE THEY ARE GOOD AT SOME THINGS - BOTH IN AND OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL**

School gives us a good foundation for our future... Education allows young people a chance to get their foot in the door in the real world. [Katrina, Hebersham Public School]

*** TO FEEL LIKE THEY BELONG AND ARE SUPPORTED - BY FAMILY, FRIENDS AND OTHER PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY**

Children think it is important to be surrounded by people they can trust, talk to and socialise with, like their friends and family. [Sam, Ashbury Public School]

Above all, 9-14 year old children need support and strong support systems to develop resilience. These support systems may consist of family, relatives, friends or teachers. [Mitchell, Freeman Catholic College]

*** TO BE HEARD, TO PARTICIPATE AND TO BE LISTENED.**

Other needs were to have a voice in society, the need to be valued and to be listened to. [April, Beverly Hills Girls High School]

I think they could include children in decisions more and think of them as people as opposed to younger parts of society that will become important. They should be part of the discussion as opposed to an offset. [Mitchell, St Luke's Grammar School].

Running programs in schools that children say they need is a great way of making children want to learn more, and making them learn and participate in what they think is important. [Sam, Ashbury Public School]

*** TO BE MORE INDEPENDENT, BUT ALSO TO BE SAFE**

.... as you get older, you become more independent and you search for a safe and fun environment in which to be with your friends. [Lachlan, Castle Hill High School]



WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO HAPPEN

These are some of the things kids told the Committee, and what the Committee suggested that the NSW Government should do.

WHAT KIDS SAID:

All children need to have activities that allow them to grow and develop. In the western suburbs children really need a range of things to do to relax and have fun. We need sporting centres, dance groups, discos, social clubs, facilities for hobbies, and community centres where we can learn new things and just be together, meet new people and talk to someone that can help with their concerns and problems.

[Byron, Hebersham Public School]

WHAT TO DO:

Increase funding for activities after school and during school holidays, especially in areas where families are doing it tough.

WHAT KIDS SAID:

...there is a strong lack of public transport so it is very difficult to get to different events and venues. We can feel isolated and somewhat confined.

[Sarah, Young People Big Voice, Lismore]

WHAT TO DO:

Increase youth transport programs across New South Wales so kids can get to things like sport and concerts.

WHAT KIDS SAID:

Often young people do not know what their rights are.... there needs to be lots more education for young people about what are your rights at work, and what should and should you not stand for and what can you do.

[Sarah, Young People Big Voice, Lismore]

WHAT TO DO:

Make sure kids learn about workplace and employment issues in their Year 5, 6 and 7 Personal Development, Health and Physical Education classes.

WHAT KIDS SAID:

...the most important thing would be having someone to talk to. When you have an issue the most important thing is to get it out, tell someone how you are feeling. I think the most important thing would be having a counsellor at your school.

[Justin, St Francis De Sales Primary School]

WHAT TO DO:

Have a look at school counselling, to make sure there are enough school counsellors in schools.

WHAT KIDS SAID:

Children our age need to become resilient to things that might happen in our lives ... Sometimes in our lives things might happen, like family members getting sick, or much worse. We need to have someone to go to and to talk to. We need to learn strategies that will help us cope with these things.

[Taone, Hebersham Public School]

WHAT TO DO:

Develop programs in schools that make sure kids can bounce back and cope with bad times.



HELPING KIDS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

It's really important for 9-14 year-old kids to be able to get on well in their lives - at school, with friends and at home. Helping kids in this age group can make a difference, not only to what's happening to them now, but also to their futures. Many people told the Committee that it is important to help kids before their problems get really serious.

I just went to a public school...and all my friends were smoking all the time and going in a downward spiral and not doing much. One afternoon my friend asked me to go to boxing at the PCYC and that kind of sets off a chain reaction where I got involved in more sport, I got involved in the PCYC. I can pretty

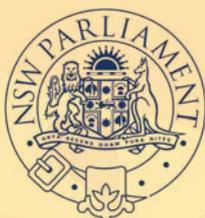
much thank the PCYC because I went on this leadership camp—the Blue Star program... Then I became the State youth representative and it turned into a big snowball from getting involved in a community sport. [Ahri, Young People Big Voice, Lismore]

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The NSW Government has 6 months to respond to what the Committee said in its report about 9-14 year old kids. The Government's response is due in March 2010.

If you'd like to see the Committee's full report and find out about what the Committee does, check out:
www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/children.

To find out more about what kids have to say about different topics like school, mobile phones and having fun, go to the NSW Commission for Children and Young People's website: www.kids.nsw.gov.au



Our thanks to the kids who told us about their experiences and ideas when we were developing the report. Thanks also to the kids who commented on the draft versions of this resource and to those whose photos we've used.

© 2009 ISBN 9781921686009